

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. **(Previously Presented)** An apparatus for controlling the rigidity of a vehicle, the apparatus comprising:

a controller for controlling a buckling form by applying a lateral force to a member subjected to a collision load,

wherein the lateral force is applied to the member in a direction substantially perpendicular to a direction of the collision load, and

wherein the collision load is applied to the vehicle in a direction extending from a first longitudinal end of the vehicle to a second longitudinal end of the vehicle,

said controller comprising:

frame restrictors provided on at least one portion of said member in the direction substantially perpendicular to the collision load, and which restrict deformation of said member in the direction substantially perpendicular to the collision load through the lateral force, and

a restriction regulator which regulates a restriction state of said frame restrictors.

Claims 2-3. **(Canceled)**

4. **(Previously Presented)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising at least one collision detector, wherein the lateral force is controlled based on an evaluation output from the at least one collision detector.

5. **(Previously Presented)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the controller is provided between an upper wall of the member and a lower wall of the member, and wherein the member is a bumper.

6. **(Previously Presented)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the at least one collision detector comprises a distance sensor that is usable with at least one of a speed sensor and a CCD camera.

7. **(Previously Presented)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the at least one collision detector comprises a plurality of distance sensors provided on the bumper.

8. **(Previously Presented)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the buckling of the member occurs in a primary deformation mode and a secondary deformation mode, and wherein a ratio of a length L of the member to a thickness t of the member L/t is set so that a difference between a buckling load during the primary deformation mode and a buckling load during the secondary deformation mode is substantially equal to a predetermined value.

9. **(Previously Presented)** An apparatus for controlling the rigidity of a vehicle body, the apparatus comprising:

a side frame member of the vehicle body;

a lateral force generator which controls buckling of an intermediate member disposed on the side frame member and which applies a lateral force to a collision load to be applied to said intermediate member disposed on the side frame member,

wherein the collision load is applied in a direction of a longitudinal axis of the side frame member, which is parallel to a longitudinal axis of the vehicle body, and

wherein the lateral force is applied in a direction substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the side frame member; and

at least one collision detector,

wherein the lateral force is controlled based on an evaluation output from the at least one collision detector, and

wherein the at least one collision detector comprises a plurality of distance sensors provided on the bumper.

10. **(Previously Presented)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the intermediate member comprises a hollow frame member, and the lateral force generator comprises a frame restrictor provided on at least one end portion of the hollow frame member and which restricts deformation of the hollow frame member through the lateral force, and a restriction regulator which regulates the restriction state of the frame restrictor.

11. **(Currently Amended)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the lateral force generator is disposed within the ~~side frame~~ intermediate member.

12. **(Previously Presented)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the at least one collision detector comprises a distance sensor that is usable with at least one of a speed sensor and a CCD camera.

13. **(Previously Presented)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the buckling of the intermediate member occurs in a primary deformation mode and a secondary deformation mode, and wherein a ratio of a length L of the intermediate member to a thickness t of the intermediate member L/t is set so that a difference

between a buckling load during the primary deformation mode and a buckling load during the secondary deformation mode is substantially equal to a predetermined value.

14 **(Previously Presented)** An apparatus for controlling the rigidity of a vehicle body, the apparatus comprising:

 a side frame member of the vehicle body, the side frame member having a first side frame member portion and a second side frame member portion,

 a lateral force generator which controls buckling of the side frame member by applying a lateral force to a collision load to be applied to an intermediate member disposed directly between opposing end faces of the first and second side frame member portions,

 wherein the collision load is applied in a direction of a longitudinal axis of the side frame member, which is parallel to a longitudinal axis of the vehicle body, and

 wherein the lateral force is added in a direction substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the side frame member.

15. **(Currently Amended)** The apparatus as claimed in Claim 14, wherein the intermediate member comprises a hollow frame member, and the lateral force generator comprises a frame restrictor provided on at least one ~~end~~ intermediate portion of the hollow frame member and which restricts deformation of the hollow frame member through the lateral force, and a restriction regulator which regulates the restriction state of the frame restrictor.